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Rapporteur: Mr Thomas **Schlesinger** (Austria)

Addendum

Programme questions

Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 15. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific

1. At its 16th and 17th meetings, on 15 June 1998, the Committee considered the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It had before it the proposals in respect of programme 15, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific.

2. The representative of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific introduced programme 15 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. Support for the proposed revisions was expressed. It was considered that the proposed revisions were formulated in conformity with the conference structure mandated by the Commission in its resolution 53/1 of 30 April 1997 and took into account global and regional developments, such as the current financial crisis. The decision to revise the programme structure by streamlining the existing subprogrammes from 10 to 7 in order to increase efficiency and optimize use of resources and, at the same time, to reflect activities to assist least developed, landlocked and island developing countries and countries with economies in transition in all the subprogrammes was welcomed. The general principles underlying

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regional cooperation, as well as the three themes of economic cooperation, sustainable development and poverty alleviation, were endorsed.

4. The view was expressed that the proposed revisions had expanded the objectives of ESCAP and did not reflect the Commission's recent mandate for priority setting. It was considered that the narrative of paragraphs 15.5 and 15.6 should have clearly indicated the relationship between the Committees and the subprogrammes.

5. The view was expressed that the activities of ESCAP related to landlocked countries should take into account the problems and needs of transit countries. Therefore it was expressed that in order to improve their transit infrastructure at the regional, subregional and interregional levels, financial and technical assistance should be provided to them. Another view was expressed, and attention was drawn to the mandates contained in General Assembly resolution 52/19 of 21 November 1997 entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization".

6. The integration of the gender perspective in all areas of work, in compliance with the directives of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, was welcomed. However, the view was expressed that a specific objective on gender mainstreaming should have been included in subprogramme 15.3, Social development.

7. The view was also expressed that there should have been an explicit reference in paragraph 15.4 to coordination with the United Nations funds and programmes and the Bretton Woods institutions.

8. The mandate for paragraph 15.9 (f) was questioned. The Committee was informed that this paragraph reflected the result of the objectives described in paragraphs 15.14 (c) and (d) of the proposed revisions.

9. Concern was expressed that the merger into one of the two subprogrammes "Regional economic cooperation: trade and investment" and "Regional economic cooperation: industry and technology" should not undermine the importance of technology transfer to developing countries.

10. It was noted that the words "the region's dynamic growth" in the last sentence of paragraph 15.10, were no longer accurate in view of the current economic crisis in the region. It was also emphasized that the recent financial crisis should be given priority attention in subprogramme 15.2, Development research and policy analysis.

11. Paragraph 15.12 was welcomed, in particular as regards the sharing of experiences among member countries of the region.

12. The view was expressed that the text in paragraphs 15.8 and 15.12 to 15.15 should be modified so as to reflect more accurately the recent mandates adopted by the Commission.

Conclusions and recommendations

13. The Committee recommended approval of the revisions to programme 15 of the medium-term plan, subject to the following modification:

Paragraph 15.15 (d)

***Insert* and cooperation *after* partnership**

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Programme questions

Proposed revision to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 16. Economic development in Europe

1. At its 17th meeting, on 15 June 1998, the Committee considered the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It had before it proposals in respect of programme 16, Economic development in Europe.

2. The Chief of the Regional Commissions New York Office introduced programme 16 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. Appreciation was expressed for the proposed revisions, which fully reflected both the ministerial Declaration on the Strengthening of the Economic Cooperation in Europe, adopted in 1997, as well as the ECE Plan of Action. However, it was pointed out that, in the introductory paragraphs of the proposed revisions to programme 16, the so-called "sunset"clause was mentioned. Regret was expressed that such mention was made in a United Nations document by the Secretariat, while the General Assembly itself was still involved in discussing the issue and had yet to decide thereon.

4. Clarification was sought regarding the mandate for the reference to time-frame and sunset clauses. The Committee was informed that these concepts were introduced in the reform package adopted by the Commission and apply only to the ad hoc groups of governmental experts that are established for a two-year period with a precise programme of work. This category of intergovernmental body facilitates the rotation of activities within

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the mandate and areas of expertise of ECE. At the end of the two-year period, new requests from member States can thus be addressed through the establishment of new ad hoc groups of experts, while not inflating the intergovernmental structure of the Commission.

5. In response to a question on the type of cooperation between European and North African States, the Committee was informed that a general concern of ECE was to make its integration tools (mainly norms and standards) available to countries outside the region, notably the Mediterranean countries (both Middle East and North African). For example, some ECE norms and conventions in the field of transport had been adopted by a number of those countries. ECE also cooperates with them in the fields of trade facilitation and energy (gas). In addition, ECE, jointly with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), is responsible for the implementation of the Economic and Social Council resolution on the Europe-Africa permanent link through the Strait of Gibraltar.

Conclusions and recommendations

6. The Committee recommended approval of the proposed revisions to programme 16 of the medium-term plan, subject to the following modification:

Paragraph 16.1

In the first sentence, *replace* European *with* member.

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Proposed revision to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 17. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

1. At its 17th meeting, on 15 June 1998, the Committee considered proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It had before it proposals in respect of programme 17, Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

2. The representative of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean introduced programme 17 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. The revisions proposed under the programme, regarding mainstreaming gender issues, were endorsed. It was stated that they were of great importance to the region and that they were consistent with the mandates from the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

4. Clarification was sought as to the reason for not submitting additional revisions to programme 17 and for not reviewing the legislative mandates in all subprogrammes. The Committee was informed that, regardless of the impact on regional economic growth of current events, such as the unfolding Asian crisis or the effect of the warming current of El Niño, the issues addressed by each of the subprogrammes remained unchanged, and that the specific implications of such events would be more practically referred to in the next

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programme budget proposal. The Committee was also informed that the Secretariat maintained an active database on legislative mandates, which was constantly updated to ensure its relevance to all subprogrammes.

Conclusions and recommendations

5. The Committee recommended approval of the proposed revisions to programme 17 of the medium-term plan, subject to the following modification:

The last sentence of paragraph 17.25 (c) *should read*

Inter-agency coordination on gender issues, in particular with the organs, bodies and agencies of the United Nations system that are active in the region, will be strengthened.

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Programme questions

Proposed revision to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 18. Economic and social development in Western Asia

1. At its 17th meeting, on 15 June 1998, the Committee considered the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It had before it proposals in respect of programme 18, Economic and social development in Western Asia.

2. The representative of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) introduced the revisions to programme 18 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. It was pointed out that, in the absence of the consideration of the proposed revisions by the Commission, an ad hoc mechanism for the review of these revisions should have been established. The Committee was informed that the views of the member States of the Commission on the revisions would be sought in the context of the report on the activities of the Commission that is dispatched to them in the years when the Commission does not meet.

4. The view was expressed that the meaning of the terminology proposed to be used in paragraph 18.12 (a) (gender-sensitive demographic analysis) and in paragraph 18.13 (a) (feminization of poverty) needed to be clarified. The Committee was informed that the terminology "feminization of poverty" was used in the Beijing Declaration and Platform

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for Action, and that the words "gender-sensitive" before "demographic analysis" meant that the demographic analysis to be carried out by ESCWA would include gender variables.

Conclusions and recommendations

5. The Committee recommended approval of the proposed revisions to programme 18 of the medium-term plan, subject to the following modifications:

Paragraph 18.12 (a)

Replace **gender-sensitive demographic analysis** ***with*** **demographic analysis, including gender variables**

Paragraph 18.13 (a)

Replace **feminization of poverty** ***with*** **increasing impact of poverty on women**

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Programme questions

Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 20. Humanitarian assistance

1. At its 13th meeting, on 11 June 1998, the Committee considered the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It had before it the proposal in respect of programme 20, Humanitarian assistance.

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced programme 20, Humanitarian assistance, and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. It was recalled that, in accordance with resolutions 52/12 B of 19 December 1997 and 52/220 of 22 December 1997, the operational demining activities as well as the Mine Clearance Unit were transferred to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and that the humanitarian mine-clearance activities should be conducted under the responsibility of the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator. It was also noted that for the same reasons, the disaster management training programme was transferred to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

4. The view was expressed that the proposed continuation beyond the year 1999 under subprogramme 20.3, Natural disaster reduction, of activities related to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction was not justified, taking into account that the responsibility for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness was transferred

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to UNDP under the terms of resolution 52/12 B and that the Decade itself was ending in 1999. Other views were expressed in support of the revised objectives of subprogramme 20.3. In that context it was stated that by its resolutions 51/185 of 16 December 1996 and 52/200 of 18 December 1997, the General Assembly had already emphasized the need for the continuation of a concerted and coordinated international effort to prevent, mitigate and rehabilitate damage caused by natural disasters.

Conclusions and recommendations

5. The Committee recommended approval of the proposed revisions to programme 20, Humanitarian affairs, of the medium-term plan, subject to the following modifications:

***Replace* paragraph 20.2 with the following:**

"20.2 The overall orientation of the programme is to ensure the timely, coherent and coordinated response of the international community to disasters and emergencies, including through effective use of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee; to promote natural disaster reduction in the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction; to facilitate the elaboration of policies to guide the work of the humanitarian community, including, *inter alia*, the linkages between emergency relief, rehabilitation and development; and to advocate guiding principles of humanitarian assistance."

***Add* subparagraph 20.4 (a) *bis* as follows:**

"(a) *bis*. To serve as a joint secretariat for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs, ensuring an effective exchange of information and a process of consultation between the two Committees;"

***Replace* subparagraph 20.4 (b) with the following:**

"(b) To promote the formulation and/or refinement of policy on access to and protection of victims of conflict; United Nations system responsibilities for internally displaced persons; the humanitarian interface with peacekeeping operations; security for humanitarian staff and supplies in conflict situations; the linkage between humanitarian action and the early commencement of post-conflict reintegration, reconstruction and rehabilitation activities; principles of engagement, suspension and disengagement for humanitarian agencies in the field; and other humanitarian issues that fall between gaps in existing mandates of agencies;"

***Add* subparagraph 20.4 (b) *bis* as follows:**

"(b) *bis*. To encourage increased joint programming and prioritizing of humanitarian action among agencies at the field level, thus enhancing the consolidated appeals process;"

***Replace* paragraph 20.8 with the following:**

"20.8 The Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation, in particular its Plan of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held at Yokohama, Japan, from 23 to 27 May 1994, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/22 A of 2 December 1994, calls for reducing the vulnerability of populations at risk from natural disasters and similar

emergencies through the integration of disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation into development planning at the local, regional and national levels. While the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, proclaimed by the Assembly in its resolution 44/236 of 22 December 1989, is coming to an end in 1999, the need for a continuation in the future of a concerted and coordinated international effort to prevent, mitigate and rehabilitate the damage caused by natural disasters has been recognized by the Assembly in its resolutions 51/185 of 16 December 1996 and 52/200 of 18 December 1997. In this respect decisions are to be taken by the Assembly on the division of responsibilities within the United Nations system on that coordination. Responsibilities for operational activities for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness shall be undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme in accordance with Assembly resolution 52/12 B of 19 December 1997."

Replace **paragraph 20.9 with the following:**

"20.9 Subject to the outcome of the end of the Decade review to be carried out by the General Assembly, the objectives of the subprogramme in the interim, through 31 December 1999, which would be pursued within a coordinated and concerted inter-agency approach, would be to promote:"

Replace **subparagraph 20.9 (b) with the following:**

"(b) Policy commitment and necessary technical support for disaster reduction practices, including through the appropriate application of science and technology at the country and regional levels;"

Replace **subparagraph 20.9 (d) with the following:**

"(d) Community involvement in the planning and implementation of disaster reduction measures."

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Programme questions

Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 23. Public information

1. At its 13th meeting, on 11 June 1998, the Committee considered the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It had before it proposals in respect of programme 23, Public information.

The representative of the Secretary-General introduced programme 23 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. It was noted that, as information activities influenced the life of people everywhere, an accurate understanding of the work of the United Nations was important. Views were also expressed in support of the reorientation of the Department of Public Information.

4. While underscoring the importance of public information activities, members expressed the view that the proposed revisions should have included information activities concerning international cooperation, international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, environment and drugs. Further, the view was expressed that, as the focal point for information activities within the United Nations system, the Department of Public Information should be strengthened and that a strong information structure should be devised. Support was expressed for a stronger communication strategy to be devised by the

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Department and the need to strengthen the ties between the Department and substantive bodies within the Organization.

5. Regarding paragraph 23.10, it was pointed out that there existed a procedure through which the Economic and Social Council recognized representative groups of civil society, such as non-governmental organizations, by giving them consultative status to become actively engaged with the United Nations. It was suggested that it would be more appropriate to refer to the representative groups of civil society as major groups, so that such groups would be able to engage with the United Nations without having a consultative status with the Council.

6. Members expressed the view that electronic communication provided an effective means of communication and played an important role in information collection and dissemination. While the increased use of electronic communication was supported, concerns were expressed that there existed a considerable technological gap between Member States. It was, therefore, emphasized that other forms of media, such as radio, print and television, should be given equal importance. It was further pointed out that, while the use of electronic media was increasing, the more traditional means for the dissemination of information should continue to be used in view of the technological gap between Member States. It was also pointed out that ways and means for developing a United Nations international radio broadcasting capacity for direct communication with United Nations constituencies should be explored.

7. Great importance was attached to the role of United Nations information centres in disseminating information at the local and regional levels.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee welcomed the development of digital technology, computerization and the Internet, and recommended that traditional media – print, radio and television – should continue to receive high priority to ensure outreach to all countries, in particular developing countries.

9. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly the approval of the proposed revisions to programme 23, Public information, of the medium-term plan, subject to the following modifications:

(a) In the first sentence of paragraph 23.2, insert the phrase "and General Assembly resolutions 52/12 A of 12 November 1997 and 52/12 B of 19 December 1997," after "(A/51/950)";

(b) Add old paragraph 23.7 as paragraph 23.7 (bis) after new paragraph 23.7;

(c) In the first sentence of paragraph 23.8, replace the words "common system" by the words "United Nations system";

(d) At the end of paragraph 23.8, add the phrase "and the views of the host Governments";

(e) In paragraph 23.13, replace the word "celebrities" by the words "outstanding personalities".

10. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly invite the Secretary-General to conduct a review, in consultation with the host Governments, of the effectiveness of the functioning of the United Nations information centres, including those already integrated with other United Nations offices.